REPORT

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE TO WHICH WAS REFERRED

THE PETITION OF

DAVID BURNS, AND OTHERS,

INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTY OF

OXFORD.

AND DRAFT OF AN ADDRESS TO

HIS MAJESTY

ON THE SUBJECT OF LANDS FOR

COMMON SCHOOLS,

FOUNDED ON THE SAME.

Séminaire de Québec
S.M.E.
1904

Education Brock Can No 1

To the Honorable the Commons House of Assembly.

THE Committee to whom was referred the petition of David Burns, and others, inhabitants of the county of Oxford, upon the subject of Common Schools, respectfully report, that the Common Schools of this Province are generally in so deplorable a state that they scarcely deserve the name of Schools; the amount of public money annually expended, for the support of Common schools, is quite insufficient to effect the object for which it was originally intended, and, from the smallness of the amount and mode of application, is rendered almost useless.

They would therefore earnestly recommend the revision of the Common School law, so that it shall be at once simple, clear and efficient, dividing the public schoool money equally among the children taught in organized schools by a person who has a certificate from the district board of education, or school inspectors, of his or her ability to teach a Common School, so that the sum received shall be actually applied towards the payment of the teachers wages.

The Common school fund should be so large that the interest would be sufficient, added to what the proprietors of Common schools are able to pay, to support Common school teachers respectably, and be generally applied throughout the Province, so that Common school teaching instead of being a mere matter of convenience to transient persons, or common idlers, would become a regular respectable business, in the hands of gentlemanly, well educated persons.

Surely the formation of the minds of our children, on which must depend the happiness or misery we are to enjoy with them, and their own success in life, is a business worthy to be made respectable, worthy of the patronage of men in the highest walks of life: and how sacred is the trust committed to the representatives of the people!

Funds and appropriations for the support of education should be permanent, they should not depend upon the annual vote of the Legislature, nor any other casualty that might, by posibility fail, and thereby check the regular progress of education.

The inquiry then, is, where is this large fund to be found, and how is it to be obtained? Answer, There is dormant British capital in this province, that might be rendered available and productive, if placed at the disposal of the provincial Legislature, sufficient for this purpose, without taxing the people directly or indirectly, one shilling, or in any way lessening the other resourses of the Province.

One million of acres of the waste lands of the Crown, placed in the hands of school fund loan commissioners, under an act of parliament authorising the issuing debentures for *L*500000 redeemable in ten, fifteen or twenty years, at 4 per cent per annum, with authority for the commissioners to lend the money upon good and sufficient landed security, at 6 per cent, with the interest annually, the two per-cent, the difference between which the money could be borrowed, and that at which it could be loaned, would produce a profit or gain of L10000, per annum; which might be appropriated towards the support of Common schools, before, and until the lands could be made productive; but as the lands were leased or sold the rents or interest of the amount of sales would annually be added to the L10000, increasing the annual appropriation until the interest of the whole grant should be annually appropriated to the support of Common Schools.

As lands are annually rising in demand and value, there can be no doubt but what they will redeem the debt, and as landed security should only be taken for the payment of the principal and interest, by the commissioners, there could be no risk or fear of loss from the failures of those who should borrow money from the commissioners, as often happens in other money transactions.

But as ten thousand pounds, even with the present Common school funds, would be very far insufficient for the support of common schools, would it not be advisable to pledge the revenues of the Province for the payments of the interest, annually, until the lands could be made available; and as they become productive, apply the rents or interest to the payment of the interest and principal of the loan, until the debt should be paid?

Appropriate 5 per cent, L25000 annually, to the support of Common shools, and one per cent, L5000 per annum, for a sinking fund, to be placed at interest, to increase the school fund as the population of the province increases.

Your committee beg leave further to remark, that £25,000 is not one-sixth part of the sum actually required for the support of common schools in this province; there being about 250 settled townships that require immediate support for common schools; this would not be more than one hundred pounds to a township; but should something be added from the Jesuits' estates, and from the sale of some part of the Clergy Reserves, or from any other source, with the present common school grant, these funds united under proper regulations, would enable our common schools to prepare our youth for the district schools, or district Colleges endowed by the school lands already granted, and these Colleges would prepare such of our youth for the University, as shall be desirous of obtaining the highest literary honors.

To what object can the surplus revenues of the province for a short time be applied, or for what purpose could a small tax be levied, that would more materially benefit the people of this province, than for the support of common schools; the great and invaluable purpose of education.

Where the introduction of capital can be made without embarrassing the existing financial regulations of the province or interfering with vested rights, that introduction must tend to facilitate the improvement of the country, so long as it can be introduced at half its intrinsic value.

The rapid growth and prosperity of the United States may be imputed more to their anticipating their resources by means of banks and loans, whereby those resources were themselves doubled, than to any other cause.

Committe Room, House of Assemly,
26th December, 1830.

CHARLES DUNCOMBE,
Chairman.

To His Excellency Sir John Colborne, K. C. B. Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Upper Canada, Major General commanding His Majesty's Forces therein, &c. &c. &c.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

We, His Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Upper Canada in provincial parliament assembled, most respectfully beg leave to represent that there is in this province a very general want of education; that the insufficiency of the common school fund to support competent, respectable, and well educated teachers, has degraded common school teaching from a regular business to a mere matter of convenience to transient persons or common idlers, who often teach the school one season and leave it vacant until it accommodates some other like person, whereby the minds of our youth are left without cultivation, or what is still worse, frequently with vulgar, low bred, vicious or intemperate examples before them, in the capacity of monitors.

If provision were made for the liberal and punctual payment of common school teachers under proper regulations, the teaching of common schools would soon become a regular and respectable business; gentlemanly well educated persons would not be ashamed to take charge of our youth, our schools would be no longer vacant, nor our youth ignorant; Upper Canada would then form a national character, that would command respect abroad, and ensure peace, prosperity and happiness at home, perpetuate our attachment to British principles and British institutions, and enable our posterity to value, as they ought the inestimable blessings of our glorious constitution.

We would therefore respectfully request your Excellency to cause this address to be laid before His Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the colonies; representing to His Majesty that there is dormant British capital in this province, which might be rendered available and productive if placed at the disposal of the provincial Legislature, sufficient to place its schools in as flourishing a condition as they are in any part of the civilized world, and to entreat that His Majesty will be graciously pleased to place at the disposal, or transfer to the care of the provincial Legislature 1,000,000 of acres of the waste lands of the Crown, as a permanent fund for the support of common schools within this province.